

# NYC Ladders for Leaders *Employer Guide*

2026



**DYCD**

The Department of Youth  
& Community Development

**NYC**

Delivering for you.  
Every day. Everywhere.



# Ladders for Leaders Employer Guide

This guide will provide an overview of the NYC Ladders for Leaders program and an understanding of how to hire talented young New Yorkers for summer internships.

# Table of Contents

## Program Overview

<i>About Us</i>	
<i>Program at a Glance</i>	3
<i>Employer Network</i>	
<i>Participant Profiles</i>	

## Designing an Internship

<i>Getting Started</i>	
<i>SYEP to Ladders Pipeline</i>	8
<i>Developing Roles</i>	
<i>Compensation for Ladders Interns</i>	

## Program Timeline

<i>Participant Journey</i>	
<i>Employer Journey</i>	14
<i>Pre-Employment Training</i>	
<i>Resume Referrals and Interviews</i>	

## Next Steps

<i>Resources</i>	19
<i>Frequently Asked Questions</i>	
<i>Contact Information</i>	



# Program Overview



# About Us



## About Ladders for Leaders

Ladders for Leaders is a nationally-recognized program that offers outstanding high school seniors and college students the opportunity to participate in paid professional summer internships with leading corporations, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies in New York City. By hiring Ladders for Leaders interns, employers are matched with job-ready applicants that have been vetted and trained. Students undergo a competitive application process, and receive up to 30 hours of pre-employment training.

Ladders for Leaders is a component of NYC's Summer Youth Employment Program, the nation's largest summer jobs program. Since its inception in 2006, Ladders for Leaders has helped introduce high-achieving and motivated young people to the world of work, while also providing the tools and skills they need to become successful young professionals. By creating a pipeline of career opportunities for a new, talented, and diverse young workforce, the program has provided businesses and organizations access to a skilled pool of potential future employment prospects.

---

## NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) invests in a network of community-based organizations and programs to provide opportunities for New Yorkers and communities to flourish. DYCD provides youth and adults with paid work experiences, work readiness and occupational training, academic support, job placement services, and financial empowerment through a variety of Workforce Connect programs. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/dycd](https://nyc.gov/dycd).

---

## DYCD-Funded Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

There are currently three community partners that are contracted to provide the Ladders for Leaders program across New York City: Commonpoint, the Children's Arts & Science Workshops, and PENCIL. These organizations serve as liaisons between students and employers and are tasked with preparing participants for their summer internships. Providers implement pre-employment training, recommend students for relevant opportunities and set up interviews, and serve as the first of point contact for both students and employers during the internship period.



# At a Glance

## For Participants



### Eligibility

Open to NYC residents aged 16-24 years old authorized to work in the US



### Pre-Employment Training

Up to 30 hours of skills training and preparation to ready youth for interviews



### Selection

Competitive application based on academic performance and past work experience



### Internship Structure

6+ weeks and 150+ hours of internship experience with intentional learning goals

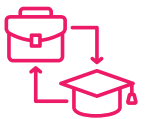
25% of students are the first in their families to graduate from high school

75% of students are the first in their families to apply to college

65% of students go on to work professionally in the same industry

33% of students are offered an extension or asked to return the following summer

## For Employers



### Impactful Roles

Real world experience for students means expanded capacity for employer



### Hyperlocal Engagement and New Energy

Build exposure across communities and tap into fresh ideas, innovation, and enthusiasm



### Employee Volunteerism

Mentorship and career coaching are a win-win for students and staff



### Commitment and Forward Thinking

Directly support the NYC economy while strengthening & diversifying talent pipelines

Ladders for Leaders matches employers with trained and job-ready candidates. Students come from diverse backgrounds and academic tracks, building lasting relationships with employers in their careers of interest. Employers receive ongoing support from DYCD's community partners while building and strengthening emerging talent pipelines.

# Ladders for Leaders Partner Network



## A History of Success

For nearly two decades, DYCD has partnered with prestigious employers across New York City's key industries, establishing valuable internship opportunities for local students and strengthening early career pipelines for hundreds of leading companies and organizations.

### BUSINESS & FINANCE

Bloomberg LP  
BNY Mellon Pershing  
Accenture  
BlackRock

### TECHNOLOGY

Girls Who Code  
The Information Lab  
Evium Charging  
Hertz

### MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

AMC Networks  
Paramount  
SAG-AFTRA  
Sony Pictures Television

### REAL ESTATE

SL Green  
Rudin Management  
Mace Group North America  
Tishman Speyer

### HEALTHCARE

EmblemHealth  
Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Northwell Health  
Planned Parenthood

### ...AND MORE

Ford Foundation  
IAC  
Madison Square Garden  
Unilever

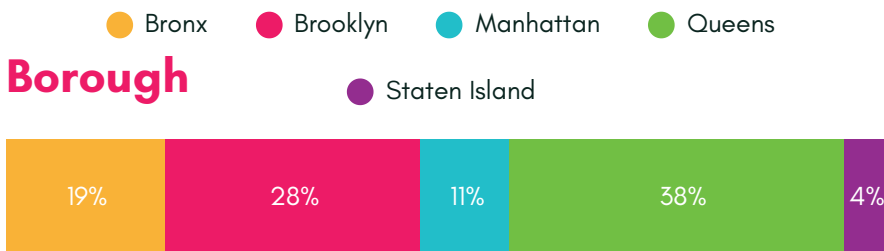


*"With Ladders for Leaders, [we] have found an exciting new partnership. Not only have we introduced young learners to the unscripted production industry, but we have also helped to build strong bonds and relationships as they pursue their careers in television production. Our interns, in turn, have shown us a fresh perspective, a joyful workplace, and a stronger community involvement."*

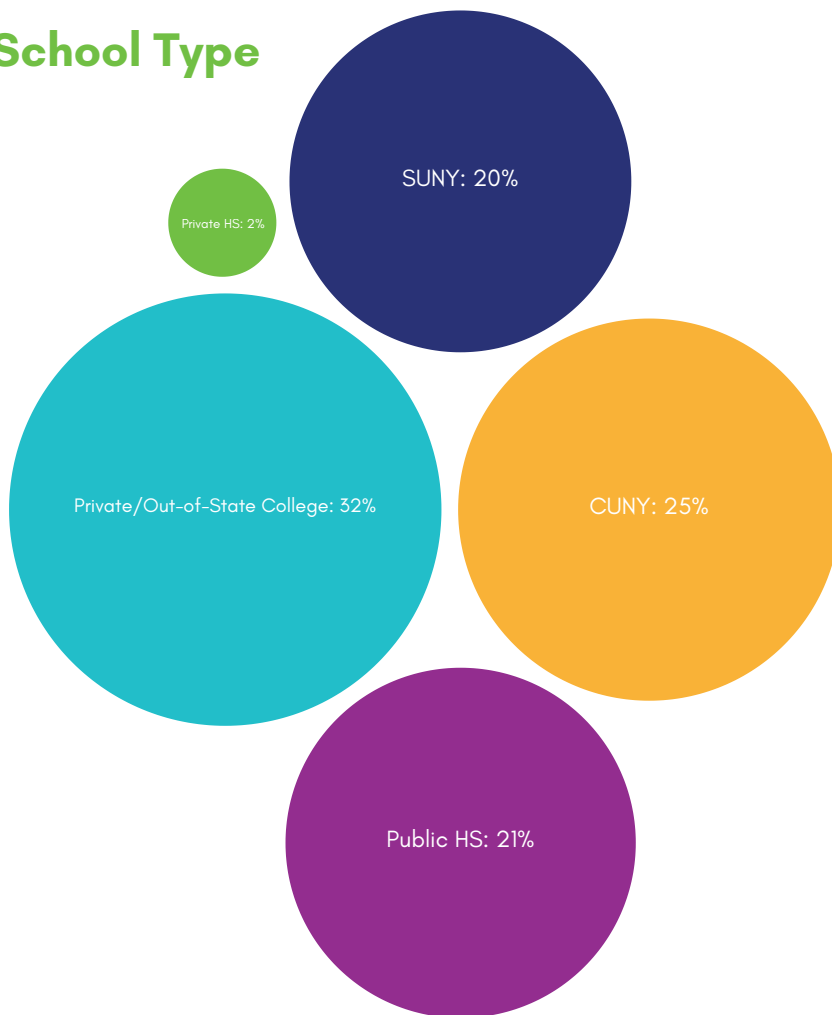
- Rachel Dax, Executive Vice President  
Sony Pictures Television - Nonfiction

# Participant Profiles

Ladders for Leaders participants are high school seniors and college students who come from a multitude of academic institutions, cultural backgrounds, and local communities – talented young New Yorkers, with a national presence and a range of career interests.



## School Type



## Top Colleges

### CUNY

Baruch College  
 Hunter College  
 City College of New York

### SUNY

Stony Brook University  
 Binghamton University  
 University at Buffalo

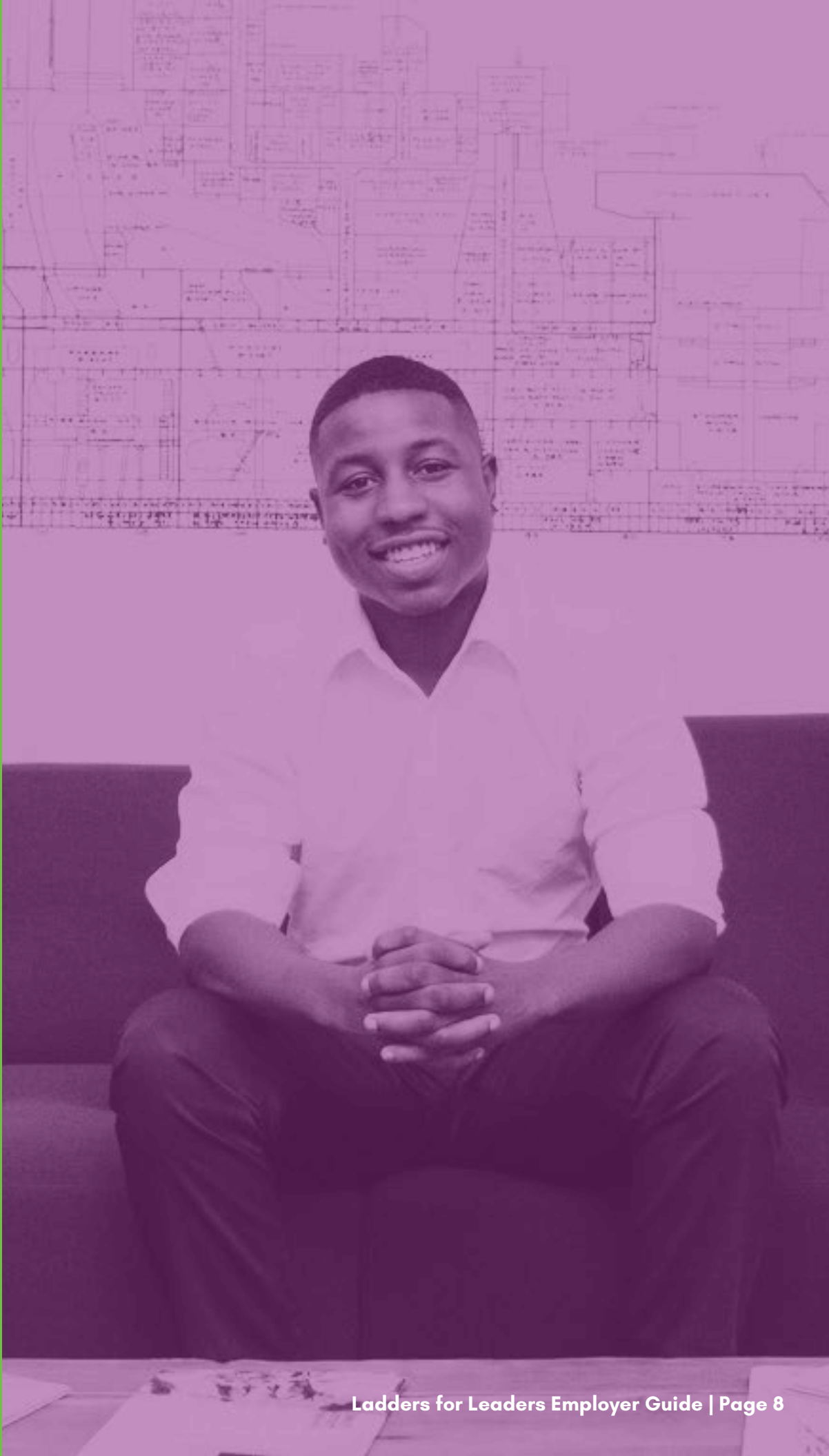
### Private/Out-of-State

New York University  
 Boston University  
 University of Rochester

## Top Majors

Computer Sciences & IT  
 Business & Management  
 Finance  
 Biology  
 Economics  
 Psychology  
 Accounting  
 Political Science  
 Advertising & Marketing

# Designing an Internship





# Getting Started

Ladders for Leaders is designed to be flexible and meet the needs of all employers – from corporate partners to large nonprofits to government agencies. Companies and organizations have the opportunity to hire NYC youth for existing internship programs or work with DYCD and community partners to develop innovative new projects and roles.

## Have an Existing Internship Program?

Commit to hiring one or more Ladders for Leaders students in a high-quality summer internship and a DYCD-funded community partner will source and select candidates for your review based on your recruitment timeline. After interviews, you will make all final hiring decisions and onboard job-ready interns for your program.

Have a longer recruitment cycle (six months plus and up to two years)? Host a networking and recruitment event during the summer program where current Ladders for Leaders students can come learn about and even interview for your internship program the following year.

## First Time Hiring Interns?

If you do not have an existing internship program – no problem! Ladders for Leaders is all about helping partners craft the ideal internships that provide value to your staff and strength your future talent pipelines.

A Ladders providers can work with you to curate a job description that serves both your organization and your future interns. Together, you will define the assigned tasks and project work while imagining the preferred candidate for these roles. Employers will receive supportive resources, onboarding materials, and training opportunities in the months leading up to start of the internship to ensure success.



# SYEP to Ladders Pipeline

Ladders for Leaders is often a young person's capstone experience within their Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) journey. Many students participate in SYEP for the first time at the age of 14, gain valuable work experience through their teenage years, and then apply to Ladders for Leaders as rising high school seniors or college students who are ready to enter professional and often competitive internship programs.

As such, our Ladders for Leaders employer partners are distinguished from SYEP worksites by providing more advanced internship opportunities for young adults who are academically ambitious, have prior work experience, and are ready to tackle higher level projects and objectives that serve as building blocks for future employment.

## SYEP Work Experience

- Often a young person's first-ever job
- Provides exposure to a new industry
- Tasks do not require specialized skills
- Builds basic work readiness skills
- Fully subsidized wages at no cost to the employer

- Bright, energetic young New Yorkers
- In-person, remote, or hybrid roles
- Supportive supervision: employers provide at least one supervisor for every 12 participants
- At least 150 total hours over six weeks

## Ladders Internship

- Competitive application process and interviews
- Students have experience and relevant coursework
- May require knowledge of advanced software, tools, and systems
- Prepares youth for near-term entry-level roles
- Employer-paid positions



# Developing Roles

Ladders for Leaders internships must have intentional learning goals for each role and built-in mentorship opportunities for students, allowing youth build upon their existing skills and align their work experience more closely with their academic majors and entry-level career aspirations.

In the Ladders for Leaders worksite agreement, employers will:

1. Outline assigned tasks, project work, and special requirements.
2. Define learning goals designed to support skill development.
3. Describe career coaching opportunities that serve as a building block for future employment within the company/organization or industry.

## SYEP Work Experience



### Data Entry Assistant

#### *Responsibilities*

- Review files and enter data into Excel
- Assist with clerical work and research
- Run basic reports with training & supervision

#### *Required Skills and Qualifications*

- Attention to detail
- Interest in technology careers
- Willingness to learn

## Ladders Internship



### Data Analytics Intern

#### *Responsibilities*

- Perform data cleaning steps on large datasets and monitor data consistency
- Build new Power BI reports that reflect program needs and refresh existing reports
- Design, build, and implement an intern-led data analysis and visualization project

#### *Required Skills and Qualifications*

- Current student in data science, business analytics, information systems, or related
- Knowledge of Microsoft data analysis tools
- Experience extracting data using SQL



# Finalizing Your Internship Description

## A Ladders internship must include:

- ✓ Clear and intentional learning objectives
- ✓ Roles, tasks, and responsibilities that contribute meaningfully to your organization's operations
- ✓ A work experience that helps interns develop skills relevant to professional career pathways
- ✓ Specific deliverables and/or final project or capstone that interns can showcase
- ✓ Opportunities for interns to fully explore their workplace or industry
- ✓ Dedicated supervisors who regularly check in with interns and provide professional mentorship
- ✓ An accessible and inclusive environment that is welcoming for all participants

**Worksite applications/job descriptions that do not meet these criteria may not be eligible.**

Ladders for Leaders participants are preparing to enter the workforce and compete for professional roles in their chosen fields. As such, **Ladders for Leaders internships should establish intentional learning goals and outcomes that support participants' skill development and career interests.**

When completing your application, please include and describe any distinctive opportunities offered to Ladders for Leaders interns, **such as mentorship or career coaching, that will be available through your summer internship.**



# Compensation for Ladders Interns

Ladders for Leaders is an employer-paid internship program. When applying to become a Ladders for Leaders worksite, employers will identify the structure in which their interns will be compensated.

## Pay Participants Directly

Employers pay wages through their own internal payroll system/process. Intern salaries are set at the employer's discretion but must meet New York State minimum wage or higher. Employers must meet a minimum commitment of six weeks and 25 hours of work per week for each intern.

For employers onboarding and paying interns directly, interns can start any time after the end of their academic calendars—typically early June for college students and early July for high school students. Schedules must comply with local labor laws, and interns may not work more than eight hours per day or between the hours of 9 PM and 6 AM.

## Donate Participant Wages

Employer donates the lump sum salary for each intern based on a minimum commitment of six weeks and 25 hours per week at New York State minimum wage between early July and mid-August.

For all donations, the employer should coordinate directly with DYCD or their community partner for donation processing and payroll administration details. For employers utilizing DYCD's payroll system, including employers donating interns' salaries to the New York City Mayor's Fund, students can work 25 hours per week from July 6-August 15 or July 13-August 22.

For any hours worked outside of the weekly allowances or dates indicated above, the employer is responsible for paying the intern(s) directly at New York State minimum wage or higher.

## Apply for City Subsidy

Subsidies for Ladders for Leaders wages are limited and require prior approval. This payment method is only available for up to six weeks, 25 hours per week between the aforementioned dates above. Participants are paid New York State minimum wage by DYCD. Employers are required to apply for subsidies and receive approval from DYCD prior to receiving candidates for consideration.

# Program Timeline

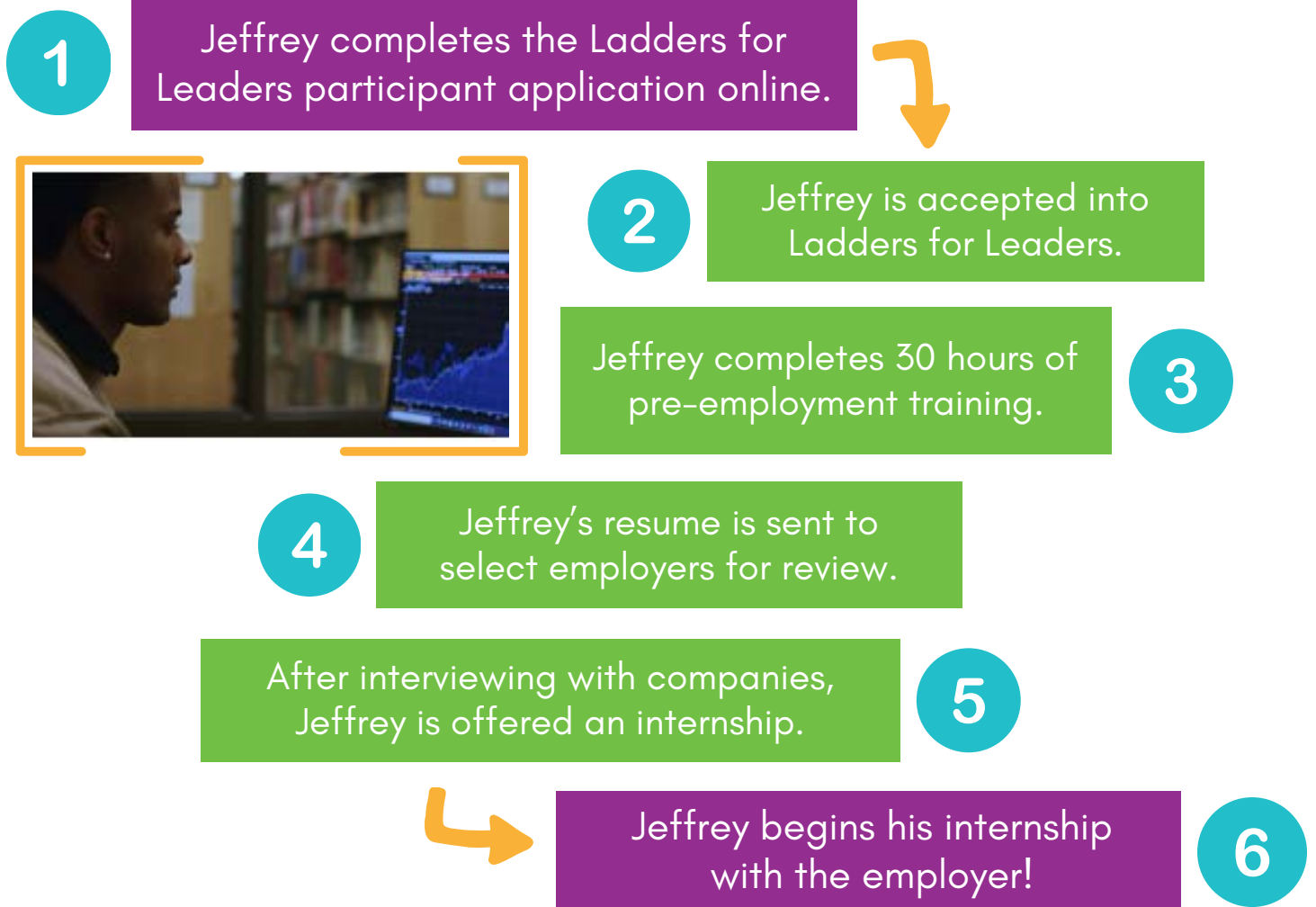


# A Participant's Journey: From Application to Internship



**Meet Jeffrey Gomez!** In 2020, Jeffrey participated in SYEP for the first time. Jeffrey was later accepted into the Ladders for Leaders program in 2023 and secured a corporate real estate internship with Rudin Management. A native of the Dominican Republic and student at Lehman College, Jeffrey's story was featured in the [SYEP 60th anniversary campaign](#).

## Follow Jeffrey's journey from application to internship!



# An Employer's Journey: From Commitment to Onboarding



**SL Green Realty** is a long-time SYEP and Ladders for Leaders partner, DYCD's Employer of the Year in 2022, and a leader in the real estate industry. Each year, the company hosts interns across various business units and at SUMMIT One Vanderbilt, while also hiring select youth into permanent roles after the summer.

**Follow along on the path to becoming a Ladders for Leaders worksite!**



\*See **Resume Referral Timeline and Interview Process** below for more on process and timeline.

\*\*Employers bringing interns directly onto their payroll do not need to submit weekly timesheets.

# Pre-Employment Training

Ladders for Leaders students participate in a comprehensive 30-hour training prior to interviewing for summer internships, designed to equip participants with foundational skills required for success in the city's leading internship programs. Led by DYCD-funded CBOs that specialize in youth workforce development, trainings cover the following key topics and provide opportunities for employers to engage in dedicated sessions.



## Professional Branding & Networking

Developing a personal brand and networking skills empowers students to build meaningful career connections and stand out in competitive fields.



## Resumes & Cover Letters

Crafting a tailored resume and cover letter allows students to present qualifications clearly and align their skills with employer expectations.



## Interview Preparation & Practice

Mastering interview techniques builds confidence in students to present their best selves and effectively communicate their value to potential employers.



## Workplace Culture & Dynamics

Understanding workplace culture enables students to navigate corporate environments with confidence and thrive in diverse settings.



## Communication Skills for Work

Building strong communication skills enhances students' ability to collaborate effectively, convey ideas clearly, and build professional relationships.



## Time Management & Productivity

Strengthening time management skills ensures participants can prioritize tasks, stay organized, and meet deadlines in fast-paced environments.



## Professional Ethics & Decision-Making

Cultivating ethical decision-making skills prepares participants to handle challenging situations responsibly and uphold integrity in their careers.



## Career Planning & Goal Setting

Setting clear goals empowers participants to take ownership of their career growth and pursue opportunities aligned with their aspirations.



## Navigating Feedback & Growth

Learning to accept and apply feedback fosters personal and professional growth, resilience, and adaptability in evolving work environments.



## Financial Literacy for Early Professionals

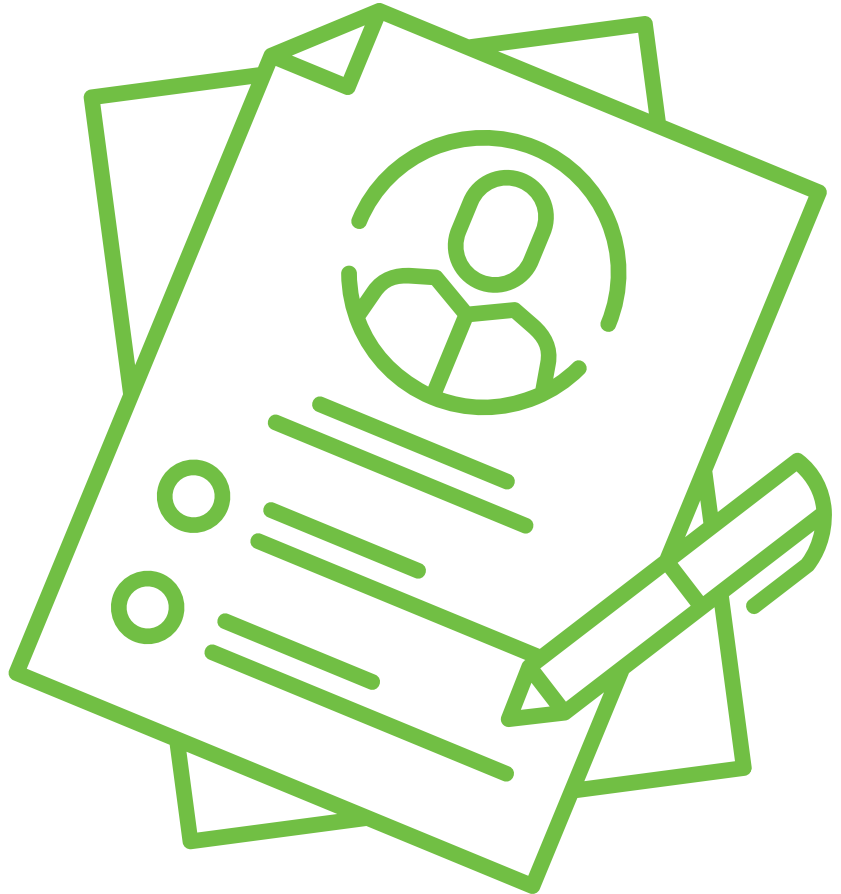
Developing financial literacy helps participants make informed financial decisions, manage their income effectively, and plan for future success.

To take part in pre-employment training and support student development prior to the start of summer internships, contact a Ladders provider.



# Resume Referral and Interview Process

1. Ladders providers share job descriptions from the employer with their students.
2. Providers share candidate resumes from interested students for employers to review.\*
3. Employers review resumes within five business days and select candidates to interview.
4. Employers reach out to candidates directly to schedule interviews.
5. Employers contact selected candidates with job offers, inform providers of final hiring decisions, and proceed with onboarding candidates.\*\*



\* Please allow the provider at least two weeks to gather interest and refer candidate resumes after you submit your worksite agreement and job descriptions.

\*\* All final hiring decisions must be made no later than the first week of June so that all students are prepared for their placements before the start of the program.

# Next Steps



# Resources



## Worksite Application

To commit to hiring Ladders for Leaders interns, employers must complete a worksite application online ([bit.ly/ladders-wsa-2026](http://bit.ly/ladders-wsa-2026)) or by requesting a PDF from a Ladders for Leaders provider.

As part of the worksite application, employers will sign DYCD's worksite assurances and certifications agreement, and must follow all policies and procedures in the agency's worksite handbook.

## Internship Design Kit

Employers without existing internship programs can co-design their role with support from a Ladders for Leaders provider and by utilizing DYCD's [Internship Design Kit](#).

## Supervisor Orientation

Staff should prepare to supervise Ladders for Leaders students by reviewing DYCD's worksite handbook, attending a mandatory worksite orientation session with their Ladders for Leaders' provider, and watching these [three short modules](#) on supervisory best practices and strategies.

## Success Stories

Learn more about the impact of the Summer Youth Employment Program and Ladders for Leaders by watching DYCD's visual campaign celebrating the [60th anniversary of SYEP](#).

*"An industry as critical to NYC's future as real estate should reflect its diversity. Making progress will require sustained support and nurturing of programs like Ladders for Leaders and the REBNY Real Estate Internship Program. We are proud to partner with the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development and the Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC on this effort to increase diversity and provide opportunities so that the real estate industry reflects NYC as a whole."*

- James Whelan, President  
Real Estate Board of New York



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Resume Referrals and Candidate Interviews

*How does Ladders for Leaders identify the right candidates for my opportunities?*

Our screening process aims to make the best match between your job specifications and student skills/career interests. Often, students will apply for opportunities aligned to their academic major. However, some candidates may be attracted to your internship roles for other reasons and will express that in their cover letters or interviews. Through the Ladders for Leaders worksite agreement, you can specify all academic and experience requirements.

*Am I obligated to hire Ladders for Leaders participants?*

No. There is no obligation to hire Ladders for Leaders candidate referrals. If in your initial review of candidate resumes you do not find candidates fit for your roles, the Ladders for Leaders team can share more candidate referrals. Employers make all final hiring decisions.

## Internship Pay and Schedules

*How does the timesheet process work? What do I need to do?*

If you are paying the intern directly through your company's payroll, they should comply with your company policies regarding timesheet submission and approval. For all employers utilizing DYCD's payroll system, including employers making intern salary donations, supervisors will review and electronically approve intern timesheets online. ([Training video available here.](#))

*Are interns entitled to lunch breaks?*

Interns are entitled to a break after completing five hours of work. One unpaid lunch hour is typical for most worksites but can also be broken up into two 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute break. This must be discussed at the start of employment and agreed upon by the intern and supervisor to ensure compliance with the New York State Department of Labor's rules and regulations.

## Internship Experiences

*What types of activities and workplaces are not permitted in Ladders for Leaders?*

For a full listing of permitted and prohibited activities and workplaces, please review DYCD's worksite handbook and consult with a Ladders for Leaders provider. Some activities that are not permitted include:

- Interns cannot engage in partisan political activities. Neither the program nor the administration of the program shall be, in any way or to any extent, engaged in the conduct of partisan political activities. Participants placed in the offices of members of Congress, State, or local legislators may only perform tasks that are related to the non-partisan aspects of the office.
- Interns cannot solicit or otherwise engage in any fundraising activities on behalf of a worksite, program provider, or organization, group, or consortium thereof.
- No person shall receive or be caused to receive any money, gifts, or services of any kind as a requirement or inducement of participation as a worksite in Ladders for Leaders.
- Interns cannot be assigned to work in the same office or affiliate where a relative or friend is in power or has direct influence in supervision of youth, creating possible bias or partiality.
- Worksites cannot charge interns for uniforms, equipment, travel, or trips incurred while working. Interns cannot operate any type of motor vehicle as part of their job without approval.
- Interns cannot engage in the practice of medicine or provide direct assistance to physicians or other medical staff in the practice of medicine. All placements at a healthcare worksite must be limited to an administrative capacity.

# FAQs Continued

## Troubleshooting

*How do I report an incident involving Ladders for Leaders interns?*

Please contact your Ladders provider with any issues regarding your summer interns. The following incidents must be immediately reported to your Ladders for Leaders community partner:

- Bodily injury, threats to an individual's well-being, self-abusive behavior, property damage, shootings, or fires.
- Child abuse, including incidents that may be sexual in nature, and occurrences involving inappropriate personal boundaries, communications, touching, or photos.
- Incidents for which Emergency/Medical Services or Police are called.
- Incidents which may be of media interest.
- Any other incident which potentially impacts the health, safety, or well-being of an individual, property, or the operation of a DYCD-funded program and any incident which stems from or is otherwise related to DYCD-funded programming.

*Can I terminate/fire a Ladders for Leaders intern?*

Supervisors should take into consideration the age, maturity, and experience level of the intern, as well as the need for appropriate supervision, training, or disciplinary action. Employers should work with their Ladders provider regarding any incident deemed appropriate to report or that the worksite is unable to resolve. If the employer has determined that they no longer wish to have an intern working at their site, the supervisor must notify their Ladders provider and await their recommendation. Interns that can no longer work at your site will be reassigned by the provider.

*How should we report sexual harassment incidents?*

Employers must comply with local and state legislation regulating prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace, as applicable, including posting required information in a conspicuous location at the worksite. All participants receive sexual harassment prevention training issued by the New York City Commission on Human Rights prior to the start of the internship. In the event that a participant reports an incident of sexual harassment at a worksite to a worksite representative, the employer must immediately notify their Ladders provider and cooperate with any investigation conducted by the provider and/or DYCD. The worksite must also allow participants the option to avail themselves of the employer's internal sexual harassment prevention policy and the worksite must conduct an investigation in good faith in accordance with that policy.

## Miscellaneous

*What additional workplace requirements are we responsible for?*

Worksites must follow all policies and procedures in DYCD's worksite handbook, along with all Federal, State, and local labor laws.

Employers must comply with the City's drug-free workplace requirements at their sites, in accordance with instructions from their Ladders provider. In addition, worksites must conspicuously post at their sites the statement given by the provider notifying all staff and participants that the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, unauthorized possession, and unauthorized use of controlled substances are prohibited and specifying the actions that will be taken against employees for violation of such prohibition.

The employer must ensure that if any staff member responsible for supervising participants is arrested or convicted for violation of a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace, the Ladders provider must be notified in writing as soon as possible and within five calendar days of the incident.

# Contact Us

## NYC Department of Youth & Community Development

Jacklyn Chan, Specialist, Employer Engagement and Partnerships  
jacchan@dycd.nyc.gov | (646) 343-6386 | [nyc.gov/hirenycyouth](http://nyc.gov/hirenycyouth)

Janae Russell, Director, SYEP In-School Youth and Community Programming  
jcrussell@dycd.nyc.gov | (646) 343-6693 | [nyc.gov/ladders](http://nyc.gov/ladders)

## Ladders for Leaders Providers

Julissa Figueroa Peña, Program Director, Children's Arts & Science Workshop  
jfigueroa@caswkids.org | (929) 265-7937 | [caswkids.org](http://caswkids.org)

Albina Baazov, Senior Director, Commonpoint  
abaazov@commonpoint.org | (718) 268-5011 ext. 111 | [commonpoint.org](http://commonpoint.org)

Raziyah Eure, Associate Director, PENCIL  
reure@pencil.org | (646) 638-2256 | [pencil.org](http://pencil.org)



**DYCD**

The Department of Youth  
& Community Development

**NYC**

Delivering for you.  
Every day. Everywhere.